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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [AU](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: BRIEFING THE AFRICAN UNION MISSION

Classified By: cda REGribbin for reasons 1.4 b&d

¶1. (C) Summary. I advised the visiting African Union mission members whose mandate is to find ways to reduce tension between Chad and Sudan that the prospects for improved relations between the two capitals were marginal, probably only cosmetic, pending the outcome of projected fighting with rebel groups. End summary.

¶2. (C) The African Union group headed by former president of Burundi Pierre Buyoya has been consulting widely in Ndjama during the past week with government officials, civil society representatives, political party personnel, and representatives of various embassies. I exchanged views with them on October 14. Essentially, I outlined US priorities in Chad to encompass resolution of the humanitarian crisis, evolution towards democracy and improvement of development performance. Regarding eastern troubles, I noted the conundrum of both Chad and Sudan hosting and/or supporting the other's rebels. Logically, each side should desist, but neither appeared willing to do so, or especially, to be first. I shared my view that both the Chadian government and the Chadian rebels appeared poised and ready to fight. I opined that some conflict was probably necessary before either side would really be willing to look at alternatives. Thus, some next step in the Chadian/Chadian rebels conflagration would be prerequisite to forward movement in relations with Sudan. Of course, if a Sudanese hand was more fully revealed in such conflict, relations could worsen.

¶3. (C) Quizzed on Chadian links to Sudanese rebels, I recounted that Zaghawa tribesmen moved easily across the common border. There were long-standing links to JEM rebels, whose personnel were periodically present in Chad. Asked about arms, I said it was widely believed that the GOC passed or procured equipment for the rebels. I did not doubt that was the case. I noted that JEM forces had come to the aid of the government during last February's fighting.

¶4. (C) Asked about internal political evolution, I indicated American support for the electoral and other reforms underway. I acknowledged that this would not result in a perfect democratic process, but widening the envelope, strengthening institutions and providing for greater plurality were worthwhile objectives. Following some resolution of the current confrontation with rebels, the challenge would be to devise mechanisms that were even more inclusive.

¶5. (C) Comment: Added to the Dakar Contact Group and the Libyan initiative, the AU mission is one more potato in the soup. Although I think they have learned a great deal about the complexities of the situation in Chad, the AU team will learn even more about regional complexities when they visit Khartoum beginning next week. Thus far, Deby has resisted entreaties to conform to continental advice to heal relations with his neighbor. Although their weight is useful, I do not see the AU mission being able to break the stalemate. End comment  
GRIBBIN